

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 AID-20

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9920

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEIDATE

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

USUN NEW YORK 307

S E C R E T MONROVIA 5875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XA, XF

SUBJECT: AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

REF: MONROVIA 5874

1. STEPHEN TOLBERT RECEIVED ME ALONE AND SAID HE WISED TO SPEAK ON PURELY PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL BASIS. HE SAID THAT ETHIOPIAN BREAK OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT THIS AFTERNOON OF NIGERIA'S INTENTION TO BREAK PLACED GOL IN DIFFICULT POSITION. HE CLAIMED GOL UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE TO FOLLOW SUIT. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY HE SAID FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS HAD GIVEN HIM FULL REPORT ON MY EARLIER DEMARCHE; HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO UNDERLINE US POSITION I WENT OVER POINTS CONTAINED STATE 209574 WITH TOLBERT.

2. STEVE TOLBERT SAID HIS IMMEDIATE CONCERNS WERE TWO POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IF GOL DID NOT BREAK RELATIONS: (1) AN ATTEMPT
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ON THE LIFE OF PRESIDENT TOLBERT BY ARAB TERRORISTS; AND

(2) THE POSSIBILITY OF "ECONOMIC WARFARE" BY ARAB STATES AGAINST THOSE NATIONS CONTINUING TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL. HE ASKED FOR WHAT "ASSURANCES" US COULD GIVE TO GOL ON BOTH OF THESE COUNTS IF GOL STOOD FIRM AND MAINTAINED RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. I REPLIED THAT THESE SUBJECTS DID NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO "ASSURANCES". WITH RESPECT TO (1), WE WERE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND OTHER MINISTRIES TO REORGAINZIE GOL SECURITY SERVICES, WITH A PRIMARY OBJECT BEING TO ENHANCE SECURITY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND KEY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THIS EFFORT COULD BE EXPEDITED BUT WOULD REQUIRE A MAJOR EFFORT ON THEIR PART. SECONDLY, I WAS SURE THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO EXCHANGE SUCH INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION AS WE HAD ON THIS SUBJECT. I INQUIRED WHETHER THEY HAD RECEIVED ANY REPORTS THAT A THREAT TO PRESIDENT TOLBERT EXISTED. HE REPLIED THAT GOL HAD RECEIVED A REPORT LAST YEAR FROM WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE A GOOD SOURCE STATING THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT, HAILE SELASSIE AND PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD BEEN TARGETED FOR ASSASSINATION BY AN ARAB TERRORIST GROUP. TOLBERT SAID HE DID NOT TRUST THE ARABS; THAT THEY WERE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.

3. WITH RESPECT TO (2) ABOVE I PERSONALLY DOUBTED THAT ARAB NATIONS WOULD ENGAGE IN ECONOMIC WARFARE OR BOYCOTT AGAINST THEIR AFRICAN BROTHERS ON THE CONTINENT. I FURTHER DOUBTED THAT THE ARAB NATIONS HAD A MONOLITHIC POSITION ON THIS QUESTION OR WERE IN FACT CAPABLE OF CONDUCTING A PROGRAM OF "ECONOMIC WARFARE". IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY AS TO WHAT COMMODITIES MIGHT BE WITHHELD, TOLBERT MENTIONED OIL AND NOTED SPECIFICALLY THE PROHIBITIVE PRICE OF OIL. I NOTED HERE THAT ALTERNATE SOURCES OF OIL EXISTED AND THAT PRICE OF OIL HAD BEEN RISING OVER THE YEARS THROUGH OPEC NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE COMPANIES AND THESE PRICE INCREASES WERE UNRELATED TO THE RECENT CONFLICT.

4. TOLBERT SAID GOL WOULD RECONSIDER TOMORROW OR THE NEXT DAY WHETHER TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND THAT THE TWO CONCERS BE MENTIONED ABOVE WOULD BE OF PRIME IMPORTANCE IN FINAL DECISION. HE ASKED IF I WOULD OBTAIN AN URGENT RESPONSE FROM WASHINGTON. I UNDERTOOK TO DO SO ON THE UNDER-STANDING THAT IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO
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RESPOND TO THESE GENERAL CONCERNNS IN MATTER OF HOURS.

5. I URGED STEPHEN TOLBERT TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY THE RAMIFICATIONS OF ANY DECISION TO BREAK RELATIONS AND AND PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME WHEN A CEASEFIRE WAS OPERATIVE AND THERE SOME PROSPECT FOR A DEFINITIVE SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. NOW WAS NO TIME TO INDULGE IN BAND-WAGON POLITICIS. I FURTHER URGED THAT IF HE WISHED A MORE

CURRENT EXPRESSION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS THAT HE INSTRUCT
AMBASSADOR PEAL TO SEEK A CURRENT ESTIMATE FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

6. UPON MY RETURN TO THE CHANCERY THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR
CALLED TO INFORM ME THAT HIS ENTIRE CONVERSATION WITH
STEPHEN TOLBERT RELATED TO THE SAME TWO ITEMS. TOLBERT
ASKED HIM ALSO TO ASCERTAIN WHAT GOI MIGHT DO TO HELP.
ISRAELI AMBASSADOR HAS IMPRESSION THAT GOL WILL MOVE QUICKLY
TO REVIEW ITS POSITION.

7 COMMENT: STEPHEN TOLBERT WAS NOT ALTOGETHER CONVINCING
IN STRESSING ABOVE CONCERNS AS BEING OF CAPTIAL IMPORTANCE
IN GOL RECONSIDERATION OF ITS PRESENT POSITION. WHILE THEY
ARE OBVIOUSLY OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO GOL, THEY ALSO PROVIDE
A SMOKE SCREEN BEHIND WHICH GOL CAN CLIMB ON THE AFRICAN
BAND-WAGON.

I WOULD APPRECIATE URGENT RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED
BY TOLBERT AND ANY OTHER GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT WISHES PROVIDE.
MANFULL

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